

The President's Daily Brief

~~*Top Secret*~~ 21 October 1968

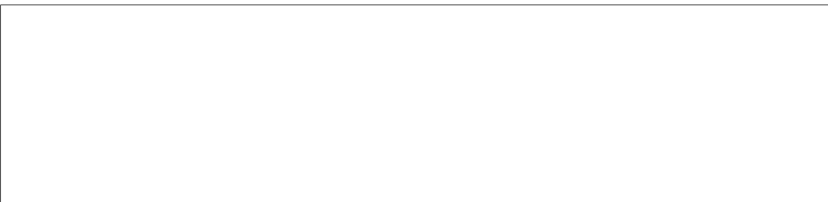


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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
21 OCTOBER 1968

1. Soviet Union -
Czechoslovakia

At least some of the Soviet divisions reported Saturday morning to be returning to the USSR now appear to have reached their home stations in the Baltic Military District. Some Soviet fighter planes also flew back to Poland Saturday. They had been in Czechoslovakia since late August.



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2. Czechoslovakia

The new status-of-forces treaty with Moscow is threatening the facade of unity the top leadership has tried to maintain.

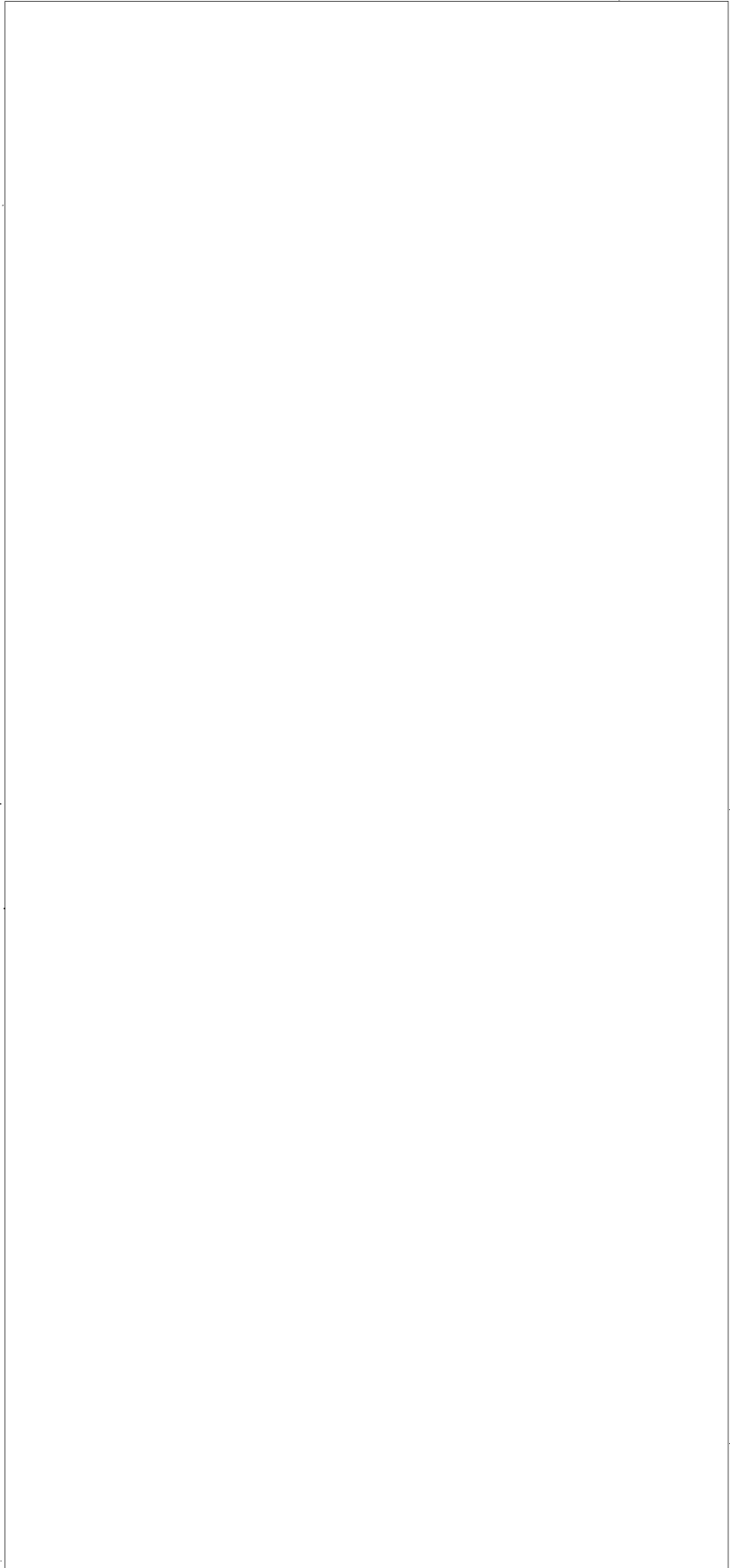
Although Dubcek is said to be resigned to the agreement, President Svoboda, among others, is described as violently opposed. Premier Cernik on the other hand appears to be using the treaty as a means of currying favor with the Soviets. We have it on good authority that he has an eye on Dubcek's job as party first secretary. He may have some competition, however. Slovak party boss Husak, thought to be Moscow's fair-haired boy, gave a speech Saturday supporting the treaty.

This polarization is also becoming more pronounced at lower party levels. The conservatives are becoming more open in their attacks on the post-January leadership, while as yet unreconstructed liberals are organizing a faction in the central committee to counter them.

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3. Egypt



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4. Cambodia

Sihanouk's security forces are trying harder, but they still seem to be making little headway against Cambodia's various dissident groups. In the northeast especially, tribal rebels

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appear to have gotten their second wind. A number of new attacks have been reported recently, and the dissidents seem to be waging a fresh campaign to cut the main roads and intimidate progovernment villagers.

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The government has brought up army reinforcements, and Cambodian intercepts indicate some of the air force's T-28s may see some rare action against dissident positions along the main road into South Vietnam's western highlands.

5. Communist Parties

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The Italian Communists, meanwhile, have an operative making the rounds in Latin America trying to persuade Communist parties there to come out against the Soviets on Czechoslovakia. All except the Mexican party have supported the Soviet intervention.

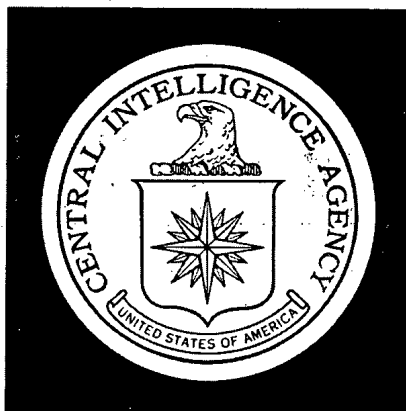
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6. Soviet Union

One indirect cost to Moscow of its intervention in Czechoslovakia may be a smaller than expected grain crop this year. Poor weather is part of the answer, but another factor has been a shortage of trucks to haul the grain to elevators. The Soviets normally avoid transport bottlenecks during the harvest by requisitioning military trucks, but there were fewer available this year because of the partial mobilization of the armed forces.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam

- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Peking Speaks Up: Peking's uneasiness about North Vietnam's current tactics and the possibility of progress in the Paris talks have finally prompted the Chinese Communists to acknowledge publicly that Hanoi is engaged in negotiations with the United States. A New China News Agency (NCNA) release on 19 October marks the first time Chinese Communist media have referred directly to the Paris talks. This belated response is underscored by the item's lead, which says that the talks started on 13 May and that 26 official meetings have been held so far.

NCNA rounds up recent Western press reports concerning the talks and says that these indicate that President Johnson is preparing to "dish out a big plot and fraud of 'halting all bombings' of North Vietnam." NCNA includes a sprinkling from most recent press speculation, but leaves its readers dangling by saying that these reports "remain to be confirmed by the further development of the situation."

* * *

Hanoi Propaganda: North Vietnamese propaganda during the weekend offered no clues to Hanoi's intentions. An article in the army paper on 19 October went to great lengths to describe the US position in Vietnam as "hopeless" and to link US foreign and domestic problems to the Vietnam war. It argued that the next US administration will face the same "painful choice" as President Johnson in deciding whether to continue or to stop the war, but it failed to mention the bombing issue or the usual arguments against reciprocal restraint on the part of Hanoi.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL
ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report today.

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